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STUDY PROJECT

BRINGING GATORS INTO THE FOLD--A LOOK AT AMPHIBIOUS DOCTRINE

BY

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United States Navy

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BRINGING GATORS INTO THE FOLD-- A LOOK AT AMPHIBIOUS DOCTRINE

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

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Throughout the history of United States naval operations, one can see the importance of amphibious operations in support of achieving national objectives. The sailors and soldiers of the amphibious forces have proven their worth in wartime and peace. But history also shows that they have not been able to do it alone. Every large scale amphibious mission has been in concert with or supported by other naval forces, including air, surface and sub-surface assets of a carrier battle group (CVBG) or battleship battle group (BBBG). However, the standardized doctrine organization and general procedures under which these battle groups function as delineated in Naval Warfare Publication 10-1, Composite Warfare Commander's Manual, is not in concert with, nor takes into consideration the doctrine of amphibious forces, as prescribed in JCS Pub 3-02, Joint Doctrine for Amphibious Operations. This paper will look at both doctrines, review their incompatibilities, propose a method of integration and recommend areas that can be emphasized for further integration. The desired end-result is a naval amphibious task force that can fulfill its assigned mission and take advantage of all the capabilities of its various elements in a cohesive, synergistic manner.



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BRINGING GATORS INTO THE FOLD--
A LOOK AT AMPHIBIOUS DOCTRINE

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"H-Hour has been confirmed. Land the landing force." The announcement over the ship's 1MC is a spine-tingling, thrilling prelude to an upcoming amphibious operation which will put United States Marines ashore to seize an objective and fulfill a mission that has been deemed vital to their country's national interests. The execution of the mission is the final phase of a process that has included thousands of man-hours of planning, a logistically complicated and detailed embarkation of troops, two full rehearsals, and finally a complicated, but undetected movement to the Amphibious Objective Area (AOA). Since ancient times, when the Phoenicians in their wooden hulled boats propelled by slaven oarsmen landed infantry ashore, attack from the sea has been a successful element of a nation's military policy. History also serves to show that the complexities that encompass an amphibious operation, particularly in recent times with the advent of fast, stealthy over-the-horizon air and sea craft, require supporting doctrine that serves as a solid framework and structure for those operations. The doctrine must support ALL phases of the operation, from earliest planning to deactivation of the AOA.

CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND

The development of amphibious warfare doctrine is assigned jointly to the Navy and Marine Corps by the National Security Act of 1947 (amended). Its present genesis is JCS Pub 3-02, Joint Doctrine for Amphibious Operations, having evolved from Marine Corps Landing Force Manual 01 and Naval Warfare Publication 22(B). Although the doctrine is fairly recent in its present form, it is very much based on the experience of the Pacific campaign of World War II.¹ But many of the factors that affect amphibious warfare have changed since that time. Technological developments such as VSTOL aircraft and Landing Craft Air Cushion (LCAC) which greatly extend the over-the-horizon capability of the amphibious forces, the construction of much more capable and flexible amphibious assault ships and dock landing ship types such as the LHA 1, LHD 1 and LSD 41 classes; and the overall improved C³I capabilities make amphibious warfare not only more lethal, but also more complex.

Arguments are sometimes raised that if the doctrine is sound, it will stand the test of time and not require to be changed with every technological advancement. After all, if it worked well in WW II, "why fix it if it ain't broke?" The arguments go that the technological advancements are fine, but really all they do is extend the size of the AOA, and amphibious

warfare remains putting Marines in the right place at the right time with the right gear. These arguments get discussed back and forth at each Amphibious Warfare Conference and the doctrine purists take their stand against the doctrine radicals. One thing that doesn't come up in the discussions much is that although our WW II amphibious operations did succeed, there were doctrinal problems that didn't get ironed out. These doctrinal problems centered around support of the amphibious forces.

Guadalcanal and Leyte Gulf are two prime examples where support of the amphibious task force by aircraft carrier task forces were not adequately spelled out in mission taskings and could very easily have turned into disaster.² At Guadalcanal, Vice Admiral Fletcher was concerned that his limited carrier assets would be trapped and defeated if "tied" to the Guadalcanal beachhead against the Japanese combined land and sea-based air threat. He withdrew his carriers, which left the amphibious forces without adequate air cover.³ At Leyte Gulf, Vice Admiral Halsey's interpretation of dual tasking drove he and his combined carrier task force north, exposing General MacArthur's Southwest Pacific Landing Force to the enemy. The dual tasking was Admiral Nimitz's operation plan "to cover and support forces of the Southwest Pacific", but which also contained the loophole "In case opportunity for destruction of major portion of the enemy fleet offer or can be created, such destruction becomes the primary task."⁴ It was chance rather than a sound doctrinal basis that prevented the amphibious operations from becoming

World War II disasters. Perhaps the best lessons these examples provide are that an unsound command and control organization, and conflicting or incompatible mission taskings degrade unity of purpose and contribute to an opening for mission failure.

Support of the amphibious task force by CVBG or BBG assets continues to be a problem today, as shown in numerous fleet exercises such as the Southern California exercise Kernel Blitz, the Korean exercise Team Spirit, and the NATO exercise Northern Wedding to name a few. Postex reports cite shortage of anti-submarine or anti-surface warfare assets, carrier battlegroup units being pulled away for other taskings without the knowledge, much less the concurrence of the amphibious task force commander, and an overall impression of misunderstanding of the amphibious mission by those in the carrier or battleship battlegroup. These problems lead to disharmony, disunity of effort and worst of all, practicing how we SHOULD NOT fight. If these problems can be rectified through doctrine revision, the fighting force will be better supported and better able to fulfill the mission.

ENDNOTES

1. Anthony E. Mitchell, Unity of Command in Amphibious Assault. p. 13.
2. Ibid., p. 7.
3. E.B. Potter, et al., Sea Power: A Naval History, p. 306.
4. Ibid., p. 340.

CHAPTER III

PRESENT AMPHIBIOUS DOCTRINE

The current "bible" for amphibious warfare, JCS Pub 3-02, Joint Doctrine for Amphibious Operations of 1 November 1986, describes that type of warfare as one which "integrates virtually all types of ships, aircraft, weapons and landing forces in a concerted military effort against a hostile shore"⁵, with an amphibious operation being "an attack launched from the sea by naval and landing forces embarked in ships or craft involving a landing on a hostile shore. It normally requires extensive air participation and is characterized by **CLOSELY INTEGRATED EFFORTS** of forces trained, organized and equipped for different combatant functions."⁶ (emphasis added)

The reference goes on to say that extremely close and detailed coordination and cooperation is paramount for any amphibious operation to be successful. The coordination is key in the planning phase because of the many services, branches, warfare specialties and units which participate in amphibious operations. Even on the most simple operations, Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force staffs integrate their appropriate expertise toward mission accomplishment, blending differing philosophies, biases and technical backgrounds.

All amphibious operations are generated by an Initiating

Directive which provides for the establishment of the Amphibious Task Force (ATF), gives it its mission and forces, and defines the Amphibious Objective Area (AOA). This directive from higher authority is central to the amphibious operation, giving it purpose and shape.⁷

Another key element to the operation is the command organization. As stated previously, the various service staffs must plan and coordinate in an integrated manner to accomplish the mission. The Navy Commander of the Amphibious Task Force (CATF) and the Marine Corps (or Army) Landing Force Commander (CLF) share those planning responsibilities, with CATF responsible for the preparation of the overall plan, and CLF responsible for the conduct of landing force operations ashore. The Initiating Directive not only specifically designates who CATF and CLF will be, but it also provides any special instructions on command relationships. Obviously, since the mission of the operation is driven by the scheme of maneuver ashore, the CATF/CLF relationship carries with it a most pronounced requirement for oneness of thought throughout the planning and execution phases. That notwithstanding, current doctrine establishes CATF's command of the entire operation, ATF and AOA in clear cut and well-defined terms. Article 270 of JCS Pub 3-02 states "The Amphibious Task Force Commander, upon the commencement of operations, assumes responsibility for the entire force and for the operation, and is vested with the commensurate command authority to ensure success of the operation."⁸ This

authority carries through all phases of the operation from planning (a phase shared equally with CLF), embarkation, rehearsal, movement and assault. CATF's command authority in the AOA is very specific and unquestioned, including control over forces not a part of the amphibious task force "when such forces are operating within the Amphibious Objective Area after the arrival of the advance force or the amphibious task force."⁹ CATF has been and continues to be undeniably in charge of the AOA.

Two other doctrinal statements from JCS Pub 3-02 drive home this point:

Article 272 - "No Navy commander other than the Amphibious Task Force Commander exercises authority over or assumes responsibility for, the operations of landing force units"¹⁰, and,

Article 273 - "In the exercise of his command authority, the Amphibious Task Force Commander, to the greatest possible extent, obtains and considers the opinion of appropriate commanders, particularly in cases involving a decision requiring the exercise of professional judgment in their operational fields. However, this requirement in no way limits the command authority of the Amphibious Task Force Commander."¹¹

CATF's responsibility for all the amphibious forces is

maintained until he sequentially passes control ashore to CLF after the beachhead has been secured and CLF has stated he is ready to assume full responsibility for subsequent operations.

In summary, the cornerstone of present amphibious doctrine, drawn from the specific Initiating Directive from higher authority, is the supremacy of CATF's responsibility for all aspects of the amphibious operation, while working in close concert with CLF until control has been passed ashore.

ENDNOTES

5. U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff. JCS Pub 3-02, Joint Doctrine for Amphibious Operations. p. 1-3.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., p. 2-3.
8. Ibid., p. 2-9.
9. Ibid., p. 2-10.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

CWC DOCTRINE

NWP 10-1, Composite Warfare Commander's Manual (U) of June 1985 is the confidential publication which promulgates standardized doctrine, organization, and general procedures for the command control of U.S. naval forces afloat engaged in operations that require the designation of a composite warfare commander.¹² Only the unclassified portions of the Composite Warfare Commander (CWC) doctrine will be addressed herein and will necessarily be kept in broad general terms.

The CWC doctrine was developed initially as a method to provide for the increased multi-threat defense of a carrier battlegroup (CVBG). It enables the officer in tactical command of a naval task force the flexibility to "aggressively wage combat operations against air, surface, and sub-surface threats while carrying out the primary mission of his force."¹³ In a CWC structure, the composite warfare commander exercises overall responsibility for the command and control of the force, with three principal warfare commander subordinates. These warfare subordinates (anti-surface (ASUW), anti-air (AAW) and anti-submarine (ASW)) "are responsible for collecting, evaluating and disseminating tactical information, and at the discretion of the CWC, are delegated authority to respond to threats with assigned forces."¹⁴ These three warfare commanders fight the defensive

(sea control) battle and are organized in a manner to allow for maximum flexibility and allocation of scarce resources. Each warfare commander wages his own particular combat operation, keeping CWC and the other warfare commanders informed. A key principal to the CWC doctrine is that "when authorized by the CWC, the warfare commanders have tactical control of resources assigned and **MAY AUTONOMOUSLY INITIATE ACTION.**"¹⁵ (emphasis added) Because of this autonomy, the warfare commanders must be skillful, aggressive and dynamic, since once the plans and policies are promulgated and rules of engagement are issued, the CWC will only involve himself in the specifics of that warfare through "command by negation" or command override.

In addition to the three primary warfare commanders, CWC will assign supporting coordinators (submarine element, air element, and electronic warfare) who support the CWC and warfare commanders by executing policy, but who are not authorized to initiate autonomous actions.

For example, in a modern day CVBG, a two star admiral Carrier Group Commander might be CWC, with a Destroyer Squadron Commander (O-6) on a Spruance Class destroyer as Anti-Submarine Warfare Commander, the Commander (O-6) of a Ticonderoga Class cruiser as Anti-Air Warfare Commander and the Commander (O-6) of the carrier as Anti-Surface Warfare Commander. The various ships, fixed and rotary wing aircraft, and submarines would be allocated to the warfare commanders, depending on the

capabilities of each of these naval assets and the perceived threat.

The central thesis to the CWC doctrine is best summarized in Chapter Four of NWP 10-1 which states that the doctrine "provides for varying degrees of decentralization (changed as necessary to fit the tactical situation); assignment of particular responsibilities to the warfare commanders; and delegation of authority (tactical control) needed to meet their responsibilities. The CWC oversees and coordinates these individual efforts, keeps the warfare commanders apprised of information from external sources, maintains an overall picture sufficiently comprehensive to monitor the progress of the battle and intervenes to redirect operations where appropriate."¹⁶

ENDNOTES

12. U.S. Department of the Navy, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations. NWP 10-1, Composite Warfare Commander's Manual (U). p. 27.

13. Ibid., p. 2-1.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid., p. 2-2.

16. Ibid., p. 4-1.

CHAPTER V

INCOMPATIBILITIES

After reviewing the two doctrines, several incompatibilities come to the fore. The first and most basic is more philosophical than doctrinal, in that the CWC doctrine is primarily defensive in nature with protection of the battle group and sea control as its primary functions. Amphibious doctrine on the other hand, is centered around offensive action or power projection, establishing substantial superiority over enemy forces in the AOA and carrying the battle ashore to reach the objectives. Returning to the definition in JCS Pub 3-02, the amphibious operation is an attack launched from the sea. Only when one starts to consider "Strike Warfare", the offensive portion of the CWC doctrine, do the two philosophically start to come together. That is not to say however that the two are totally incongruous, since in the past, the CWC concept has worked very well during the movement phase of an amphibious operation, which is primarily defensive in nature. This is of course assuming a totally integrated task force, not a situation where the CVBG is simply providing direct or mutual support. When the ATF is under the protection of the CVBG as it moves from point of embarkation or rehearsal to the AOA, the CWC concept laid over the ATF has worked nicely. The ATF essentially becomes the protected body, and its ships with their limited ASW, ASUW and AAW capabilities enjoy the protection of the CVBG. It is

once the integrated task force arrives in the AOA that the doctrinal incompatibilities really come out.

The problem in the AOA becomes one of command relationships. The amphibious doctrine has CATF supreme in the AOA and clearly in command of all units and forces. This does not allow for CWC to be the one in charge of all the battlegroup forces, per CWC doctrine. If CATF and CWC are not one in the same, the question becomes one of who is really in charge. The CWC proponents say that CWC is, since he is the one to whom the principal warfare commanders report and who has the availability of all the battle group assets at his disposal. The amphibious proponents say that CATF must be in charge since he has primary responsibility for accomplishment of the mission; that is, putting the landing force ashore and providing them adequate support and protection. The Marines in the role of a landing force very strongly support the amphibious position since they need to consult with and coordinate their activities directly with CATF and his staff.

That leaves the question of why CATF cannot be CWC and vice-versa. Although this solution certainly solves the organizational relationship problem, it exacerbates a command and control problem. If CWC is made CATF (and assuming he would remain on the CV), it denies him the advantages of co-location with the CLF and availability to the inherently amphibious advantages of the amphibious flagship (Joint Intelligence Center,

Supporting Arms Coordination Center, etc). By making CATF the CWC, the reverse arguments are true-- losing the advantages of the CV as the command and control platform for CWC. This says nothing of the loss of capability by not having the appropriate staff expertise through years of training, workups and exercises.

Previous attempts have been made to make this solution work in the form of Fleet Commanders' tactical memorandums (TACMEMOs) which are proposals for changes to tactics and warfighting procedures. These TACMEMOs have been the topic of much heated debate at the annual Amphibious Warfare Conferences. The most recent proposal from COMTHIRDFLT was a confidential draft which attempted to infuse the CATF/CLF relationship on top of the CWC organization, by making CWC the CATF as well.¹⁷ Instead of playing on the strengths of each organization, it added another layer on top of the amphibious chain of command and forced the landing force to have a higher level of command for direct coordination with the new CATF.

Some leading amphibious thinkers propose that the issue is not really one of doctrine incompatibility, but rather just a procedural problem that requires defining rank relationships and adequate resourcing. But this paper proposes that it IS in fact

a doctrine incompatibility, since the concepts of CATF's supremacy in the AOA and CWC's authority in his battle group are so deeply imbedded in the respective doctrines of each. Doctrine revision is required.

ENDNOTES

17. Commander U.S. Third Fleet. COMTHIRDFLT TACMEMO PZ 1010.

CHAPTER VI

INTEGRATION

The incompatibilities presented do not preclude integration of the two doctrines. Some fundamental changes are required though since clearly there just isn't room for two in charge, if unity of purpose and unity of command are to be preserved. There has been a need for this integration for quite some time, specifically addressed by Admiral W. H. P. Blandy in a 1951 article in U. S. Naval Institute Proceedings.¹⁸

The proposed revision that this paper offers is to make the change to both amphibious doctrine and CWC doctrine by making CATF subordinate to CWC, as an additional warfare commander. If CATF becomes the amphibious warfare commander (AM, if you will), he would report to CWC for all matters amphibious and be responsible for prosecuting the amphibious portion of the operation (which is not to say that it would be limited just to the ship to shore movement, but still would include ALL aspects of the amphibious operation). His specific relationship with CWC would be clearly delineated in the Initiating Directive (which may have to take some other form to make it compatible with CWC). He would be a co-equal with the other warfare commanders, and would share with them all the resources of the integrated battlegroup. As a warfare commander, he would still be responsible for waging the amphibious warfare combat operation,

with the commensurate authority (tactical control) needed to meet those responsibilities. He would retain authority in the AOA, but would be subject to CWC's command override or command by negation. In this manner, the amphibious warfare commander would be able to benefit from the combined advantages and resources of the integrated battlegroup. Before arrival in the AOA, he would request the appropriate assets from CWC in order for him to fulfill the amphibious mission, so that the anti-air or anti-surface warfare commanders might have to "chop" certain of their resources to the amphibious warfare commander (no longer utilizing the name "CATF"). Upon request and advice from AM, CWC and his warfare commanders would tailor the resources for the appropriate change in threat as the battlegroup shifted from movement in open ocean to assault in the AOA.

Heresy and rice bowl breaking are two thoughts that immediately come to mind when one considers the old CATF not being in charge in the AOA. But the idea of an integrated battlegroup, no longer a distinct CVBG and ARG, is so important to the overall mission accomplishment, that a radical change IS necessary.

The largest hue and cry is anticipated from the Marine or Army commander of the landing force when he realizes that he no longer is a co-equal to "the Navy guy in charge". But he still really is-- equal to the one who is responsible for that portion of the mission that concerns CLF-- putting the landing force

ashore with adequate support from the sea. The amphibious warfare commander is still in charge of the air, surface and sub-surface support in the AOA. And the amphibious warfare commander will continue to be co-located with CLF to best plan and execute the amphibious mission. The difference to CLF should be transparent. The difference to the amphibious warfare commander is that he is now subject to command negation or command override by CWC (a notion that one would think CWC would not take lightly, based on the expertise and experience of his amphibious warfare commander). The advantages to the amphibious warfare commander of the total support of the integrated battlegroup would far outweigh any loss of autonomy in the AOA.

The change proposed is different from the latest THIRDFLT TACMEMO in that it does away with the term "CATF" altogether--CWC is not CATF, he is CWC. There is no longer an amphibious task force-- it is an integrated task force. There is no superficially created Marine higher echelon that has to be co-equal to CWC. The CLF will remain at the appropriate level to his function and purpose in the battlegroup. That is not condescending at all, nor does it artificially inflate CLF out of the level where he and his staff conduct business, one of the complaints with the THIRDFLT TACMEMO.

The hidden or unspoken benefit to the amphibious force is the idea of the amphibious forces being brought into the fold of naval warfare in general, instead of being the "outsiders".

Recognition of amphibious warfare as an equal warfare specialty throughout the fleet is not only sound doctrinally, but makes sense because of the likelihood of CRUDES, AIRDALES, and GATORS having to work together in the next hostility. It makes sense in peacetime to organize and to practice the way we're going to have to fight in war.

ENDNOTES

18. W.H.P. Blandy, "Command Relations in Amphibious Warfare," Proceedings, June 1951, p. 570.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Maximizing the efficiency and combat power of the forces allocated is the goal of any warfighter. For quite some time, the United States has realized that it will have to fight in a cohesive and integrated manner to achieve that goal. Yet the amphibious task force has never been truly or fully integrated into the manner that the rest of the fleet fights. Over the years, the topic has been discussed and debated, and revisions have been proposed, but we still live with the problem.

As presently written and executed, amphibious doctrine and CWC doctrine are incompatible, in that they both present a commander to be irrevocably in charge of his forces--CWC of all his battlegroup, and CATF of his amphibious task force. When the two forces are combined and integrated, as they must be in view of the ever increasing potential threat and reduction of reaction time, the incompatibility arises. A fundamental change to each doctrine is required.

By making CATF the amphibious warfare commander under CWC, on an equal footing with the other warfare commanders, the advantage of a fully integrated force is realized. With specific command relationships detailed in the appropriate Initiating Directive or OPTASK, higher authority can be confident that the

task force he has established will be able to complete the mission.

The changes proposed will take some fundamental rearranging in the established mindset of gators and non-gators alike. The concept will have to be fully accepted in the spirit of integration and joint warfighting. Individual commands and staffs will have to learn the doctrinal and practical changes and practice them in war games, fleet exercises and deployment workups. Each community will have to learn in a much more concentrated fashion how the other operates.

The integration goes even deeper than that though, since it will require some changes in how we task organize and forward deploy. Carrier and battleship battle groups will roll up and integrate an amphibious task force from pre-deployment exercises into the deployment all the way back to homeport. Again the focus must always be on how best to organize and train to fight and win.

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